



Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

930 Custer Avenue W
Helena, MT 59620

March 7, 2003

TO: Governor's Office, Todd O'Hair, Room 204, State Capitol, P.O. 200801, Helena, MT 59620-0801
Environmental Quality Council, Capitol Building, Room 106, P.O. Box 201704, Helena, MT 59620
Dept. Environmental Quality, Metcalf Building, P.O. Box 200901, Helena, MT 59620-0901
Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks

Director's Office
Parks Division
Fisheries Division
Wildlife Division
Enforcement Division
Lands Section
Design & Construction Bureau
Legal Unit
FWP Commissioners

MT Historical Society, State Historic Preservation Office, P.O. Box 201202 Helena, MT 59620-1202
MT State Parks Association, P.O. Box 699, Billings, MT 59103
MT State Library, 1515 E. Sixth Ave., P.O. Box 201800, Helena, MT 59620
James Jensen, Montana Environmental Information Center, P.O. Box 1184, Helena, MT 59624
Janet Ellis, Montana Audubon Council, P.O. Box 595, Helena, MT 59624
George Ochenski, P.O. Box 689, Helena, MT 59624
Jerry DiMarco, P.O. Box 1571, Bozeman, MT 59771
Wildlife Federation, P.O. Box 1175, Helena, MT 59624
Wayne Hurst, P.O. Box 728, Libby, MT 59923
Glen Hockett, 745 Doane Road, Bozeman, MT 59715
Perry Backus, 65 Redtail, Dillon, MT 59725
Tom Sathers, Headwaters Fish & Game Assoc., P.O. Box 1941, Bozeman, MT 59771-1941
Broadwater County Commissioners, Broadwater County Courthouse, Townsend, MT 59644
Lewis & Clark County Commissioners, 316 N. Parks, Helena MT 59601
Helena Chapter Walleyes Unlimited, Jay Frederick, 76 Bridle Bit Loop, Clancy, MT 59634
Pat Barnes Chapter Trout Unlimited, Earl Dorsey, 805 Mill Road, Helena, MT 59602
U.S. Bureau of Reclamation, Paul Backlund, 7661 Canyon Ferry Road, Helena, MT 59602

Ladies and Gentlemen:

The enclosed Environmental Assessment (EA) has been prepared for the Canyon Ferry Reservoir Commercial Carp Permit application submitted by Richard and Donna Greene.

Comments will be accepted until 5:00 pm, March 28, 2003. If you have questions, feel free to contact Ron Spoon at 266-4237. All comments should be sent to: Montana Fish, Wildlife & Parks, Townsend Field Office, PO Box 1137, Townsend, MT 59644.

Thank you for your interest.

Sincerely,

Michael Korn
Helena Area Coordinator

Broadwater
MISC

Montana Fish, Wildlife and Parks
1420 E 6th Ave, PO Box 200701 Helena, MT 59620-0701
(406) 444-2452

ENVIRONMENTAL ASSESSMENT

PART 1. PROPOSED ACTION DESCRIPTION

Project Title: Canyon Ferry Reservoir Commercial Carp Permit
Application Date: February 20, 2003
Name, Address and Phone Number: Richard and Donna Greene
135 Duck Creek Road
Townsend, MT 59644
Ph: 266-3805

Project Location: Canyon Ferry Reservoir, Broadwater County, Montana

Description of Project:

Richard and Donna Greene have applied for a commercial fishing permit to harvest carp, longnose sucker and white sucker in Canyon Ferry Reservoir. This application is for an experimental fishery Class X Permit for the period of May1 through December 31, 2003. If commercial fishing proves feasible and biologically and socially compatible with other uses at Canyon Ferry Reservoir, the applicants would be required to upgrade to a Class A or B permit in 2004.

The applicants propose to commercially fish carp and suckers using a seine. The seine will be approximately 1000 feet long and 12 feet deep. Mesh size is 3 inches. Fish will be crowded into the seine and all non-target fish will be released alive. Target species will be loaded into fish holding cages and holding cages attached to a 36 ft pontoon boat will be used to transport fish to off-loading locations. Pending approval of the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation (BOR), off-loading at the south end of Canyon Ferry Reservoir is proposed near Duck Creek Bay during spring and summer. Off-loading sites in the northern portion of the lake during fall fishing must also be approved by BOR, but specific locations have not been identified prior to preparation of this EA. A 25 ft conveyor system will be used to load fish from the pontoon boat into transport trucks. Non-target species that were not released during the seining process may also be removed from the live cages suspended from the pontoon boat prior to entering the conveyor system.

Other groups or agencies contacted or which may have overlapping jurisdiction:

U.S. Bureau of Reclamation is the landowner of lakeshore areas. Off-loading locations, in particular, will need to be coordinated with this agency via a special use permit.

PART 2. ENVIRONMENTAL REVIEW

Table 1. Potential impact on physical environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Provided
1. Unique, endangered, fragile, or limited environmental resources				X		
2. Terrestrial or aquatic life and/or habitats			X			1.
3. Introduction of new species into an area			X			2.
4. Vegetation cover, quantity and quality				X		
5. Water quality, quantity and distribution (surface or groundwater)				X		
6. Existing water right or reservation				X		
7. Geology and soil quality, stability and moisture				X		
8. Air quality or objectional odors				X		
9. Historical and archaeological sites				X		
10. Demands on environmental resources of land, water, air & energy				X		
11. Aesthetics				X		

Comments

(A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided.)

1. Capture of non-target species (aquatic, avian, or terrestrial wildlife) is likely. The applicant will record all capture of non-target species and document fate of these animals. A Department representative will be allowed to accompany the commercial operation on occasion to observe and/or collect biological data. Removal of carp and suckers will likely have a neutral or positive influence on existing sport fish communities in the reservoir. Longnose and white suckers can be important forage species and monitoring during 2003 will determine whether future harvest of these species is prudent. See attached seasonal restrictions and area restrictions of the commercial fishing operation. These restrictions are intended to reduce the potential for impacting existing biological resources and to reduce social conflicts associated with the operation.

2. The fate of carp and suckers removed from Canyon Ferry Reservoir will depend on available markets. Any transport of live fish must be reviewed and approved by the FWP fish health committee, and a live fish transport permit would be issued in conjunction with the commercial harvest permit. Transport of live carp to west coast markets would create a minor potential for an accident that could release fish into the Clark Fork River or other streams in western Montana where these species currently do not exist. Such an accidental introduction would have a negative impact on the resident fish populations. Any potential impact can be mitigated by exercising good judgment in the transport of these fish.

Table 2. Potential impacts on human environment.

Will the proposed action result in potential impacts to:	Unknown	Potentially Significant	Minor	None	Can Be Mitigated	Comments Provided
1. Social structures and cultural diversity				X		
2. Changes in existing public benefits provided by wildlife populations and/or habitat			X			3.
3. Local and state tax base and tax revenue			X			4.
4. Agricultural production				X		
5. Human health				X		
6. Quantity and distribution of community and personal income				X		
7. Access to and quality of recreational activities			X			5.
8. Locally adopted environmental plans & goals (ordinances)				X		
9. Distribution and density of population and housing				X		
10. Demands for government services				X		
11. Industrial and/or commercial activity				X		

Comments

(A description of potentially significant, or unknown, impacts and potential alternatives for mitigation must be provided as comments.)

Although no changes in existing public benefits provided by fish and wildlife populations are expected due to the commercial fishing operation, the review of the one-year experimental Class X Permit during 2003

will determine the potential for upgrading to Class A or B permits in following years. The attached are and seasonal restrictions also reduce potential for impacting existing fish and wildlife populations.

4. Establishment of a new and viable commercial business in the Townsend area would be beneficial to the community and has the potential to increase the tax base.
5. The attached area and seasonal restrictions are intended to minimize conflicts between the commercial fishing operation and other recreational use at Canyon Ferry. Conflicts observed during 2003 will be considered prior to issuing a Class A or B permit in future years.

Does the proposed action involve potential risks or adverse effects which are uncertain but extremely harmful if they were to occur?

Potential risks related to the fishing operation are of a short term nature and are not likely to be extremely harmful. Potential risks related to transport of dead or live fish may be extremely harmful considering the possibility of accidentally introducing live carp into waters west of the divide, which would be extremely harmful. However, the likelihood of this happening is extremely low. Live fish are transported around and through the state by permitted hatchery operations regularly and we have not had any accidents or mishaps. Mr. Greene is expected to exercise good judgment in the transport of these fish because he would be hauling valuable cargo. Driving in inclement weather or poor road conditions would not be advisable. Exercising good judgment in the transport of these live fish will further reduce any risks of accidental introduction.

Does the proposed action have impacts that are individually minor, but cumulatively significant or potentially significant?

No

Description and analysis of reasonable alternatives (including the no action alternative) to the proposed action when alternatives are reasonably available and prudent to consider. Include a discussion of how the alternatives would be implemented:

- A. Allow commercial fishing of carp and suckers without imposing timing restrictions, area restrictions, or other measures to reduce potential conflicts with fish, wildlife and recreation.
- B. **Preferred Alternative:** Allow commercial fishing of carp and suckers for one year by issuing an experimental fishery Class X Permit. Additional conditions include seasonal and area restrictions to attempt to minimize conflicts with fish, wildlife and recreation. Monitoring of commercial activity in 2003 will be conducted to determine the need for future changes in permit restrictions.
- C. No Action. No conflicts with fish, wildlife and recreation would result from the no action

alternative. This alternative, however, would preclude a potentially compatible use of the existing fishery that is authorized by statute and administrative rules.

EA prepared by: Ron Spoon

Date Completed: March 4, 2003

Email address for comments: fwprs@in-tch.com

Mail comments to: Ron Spoon

P.O. Box 1137

Townsend, MT 59644

Comments due by: 5:00 P.M., March 28, 2003

TENTATIVE COMMERCIAL FISHING REGULATIONS FOR CANYON FERRY RESERVOIR

Seasonal and Area Restrictions

TENTATIVE

2003 COMMERCIAL FISHING REGULATIONS FOR CANYON FERRY RESERVOIR

These regulations will be in effect from January 1, 2003 through December 31, 2003.

1. FISHING SEASON

- a. Commercial fishing is permitted from May 1, 2003 to December 31, 2003 in portions of Canyon Ferry Reservoir south of White Earth.
- b. Commercial fishing is permitted from September 15, 2003 through December 31, 2003 in portions of Canyon Ferry Reservoir north of White Earth.
- c. No fishing will be conducted on Holidays. Weekend activity will be conducted in a manner to avoid conflicts with recreational users.

2. FISHING AREAS

The regulations provide for the harvest of carp and suckers with seines operated in specific parts of Canyon Ferry Reservoir with the following restrictions:

- a. No setting and anchoring of seines will occur north of White Earth prior to September 15, 2003 to avoid conflicts with recreationists and anglers.
- b. Commercial fishing at the south end of the lake (south of White Earth) will not be permitted prior to May 1st to avoid conflicts with walleye spawning.
- c. Commercial fishing in the vicinity of Duck Creek will avoid the Wildlife Management Area and concentrations of recreational anglers near the dikes by maintaining a buffer of at least 1 mile north of Dike 1. This point will be clearly marked on the shoreline.
- d. Commercial fishing will avoid all public boat launch facilities and other popular bays for fishing and boating.

3. OTHER RESTRICTIONS

- a. Fishing activity should be conducted in a manner that minimizes disturbance of waterfowl and avoids western grebes. Incidental catch of birds must be reported in your monthly reports to FWP.
- b. Permittee must notify the Department of seasonal schedule of operations prior to fishing.
- c. A Department representative will be allowed to accompany the fisherman on occasions to observe or to collect biological data.
- d. A summary of fishing activities and catch are to be submitted on forms provided by the Department. The report should indicate the dates and locations of fishing efforts.
- e. Off-loading sites will be determined by the U.S. Bureau of Reclamation.